

Office of the Secretary of Labor

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an hourly rate of pay whenever he finds that such action would facilitate the administration of the Act. See § 5.5(a)(1)(i) and (iii).

§ 5.26 “* * * contribution irrevocably made * * * to a trustee or to a third person”.

Under the fringe benefits provisions (section 1(b)(2) of the Act) the amount of contributions for fringe benefits must be made to a trustee or to a third person irrevocably. The “third person” must be one who is not affiliated with the contractor or subcontractor. The trustee must assume the usual fiduciary responsibilities imposed upon trustees by applicable law. The trust or fund must be set up in such a way that in no event will the contractor or subcontractor be able to recapture any of the contributions paid in or any way divert the funds to his own use or benefit. Although contributions made to a trustee or third person pursuant to a benefit plan must be irrevocably made, this does not prevent return to the contractor or subcontractor of sums which he had paid in excess of the contributions actually called for by the plan, as where such excess payments result from error or from the necessity of making payments to cover the estimated cost of contributions at a time when the exact amount of the necessary contributions under the plan is not yet ascertained. For example, a benefit plan may provide for definite insurance benefits for employees in the event of the happening of a specified contingency such as death, sickness, accident, etc., and may provide that the cost of such definite benefits, either in full or any balance in excess of specified employee contributions, will be borne by the contractor or subcontractor. In such a case the return by the insurance company to the contractor or subcontractor of sums paid by him in excess of the amount required to provide the benefits which, under the plan, are to be provided through contributions by the contractor or subcontractor, will not be deemed a recapture or diversion by the employer of contributions made pursuant to the plan. (See Report of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public

Welfare, S. Rep. No. 963, 88th Cong., 2d Sess., p. 5.)

§ 5.27 “* * * fund, plan, or program”.

The contributions for fringe benefits must be made pursuant to a fund, plan or program (sec. 1(b)(2)(A) of the act). The phrase “fund, plan, or program” is merely intended to recognize the various types of arrangements commonly used to provide fringe benefits through employer contributions. The phrase is identical with language contained in section 3(1) of the Welfare and Pension Plans Disclosure Act. In interpreting this phrase, the Secretary will be guided by the experience of the Department in administering the latter statute. (See Report of Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, S. Rep. No. 963, 88th Cong., 2d Sess., p. 5.)

§ 5.28 Unfunded plans.

(a) The costs to a contractor or subcontractor which may be reasonably anticipated in providing benefits of the types described in the act pursuant to an enforceable commitment to carry out a financially responsible plan or program, are considered fringe benefits within the meaning of the act (see 1(b)(2)(B) of the act). The legislative history suggests that these provisions were intended to permit the consideration of fringe benefits meeting, among others, these requirements and which are provided from the general assets of a contractor or subcontractor. (Report of the House Committee on Education and Labor, H. Rep. No. 308, 88th Cong., 1st Sess., p. 4.)

(b) No type of fringe benefit is eligible for consideration as a so-called unfunded plan unless:

(1) It could be reasonably anticipated to provide benefits described in the act;

(2) It represents a commitment that can be legally enforced;

(3) It is carried out under a financially responsible plan or program; and

(4) The plan or program providing the benefits has been communicated in writing to the laborers and mechanics affected. (See S. Rep. No. 963, p. 6.)

(c) It is in this manner that the act provides for the consideration of unfunded plans or programs in finding prevailing wages and in ascertaining compliance with the Act. At the same

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time, however, there is protection against the use of this provision as a means of avoiding the act's requirements. The words "reasonably anticipated" are intended to require that any unfunded plan or program be able to withstand a test which can perhaps be best described as one of actuarial soundness. Moreover, as in the case of other fringe benefits payable under the act, an unfunded plan or program must be "bona fide" and not a mere simulation or sham for avoiding compliance with the act. (See S. Rep. No. 963, p. 6.) The legislative history suggests that in order to insure against the possibility that these provisions might be used to avoid compliance with the act, the committee contemplates that the Secretary of Labor in carrying out his responsibilities under Reorganization Plan No. 14 of 1950, may direct a contractor or subcontractor to set aside in an account assets which, under sound actuarial principles, will be sufficient to meet the future obligation under the plan. The preservation of this account for the purpose intended would, of course, also be essential. (S. Rep. No. 963, p. 6.) This is implemented by the contractual provisions required by § 5.5(a)(1)(iv).

§ 5.29 Specific fringe benefits.

(a) The act lists all types of fringe benefits which the Congress considered to be common in the construction industry as a whole. These include the following: Medical or hospital care, pensions on retirement or death, compensation for injuries or illness resulting from occupational activity, or insurance to provide any of the foregoing, unemployment benefits, life insurance, disability and sickness insurance, or accident insurance, vacation and holiday pay, defrayment of costs of apprenticeship or other similar programs, or other bona fide fringe benefits, but only where the contractor or subcontractor is not required by other Federal, State, or local law to provide any of such benefits.

(b) The legislative history indicates that it was not the intent of the Congress to impose specific standards relating to administration of fringe benefits. It was assumed that the majority of fringe benefits arrangements of this

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nature will be those which are administered in accordance with requirements of section 302(c)(5) of the National Labor Relations Act, as amended (S. Rep. No. 963, p. 5).

(c) The term "other bona fide fringe benefits" is the so-called "open end" provision. This was included so that new fringe benefits may be recognized by the Secretary as they become prevailing. It was pointed out that a particular fringe benefit need not be recognized beyond a particular area in order for the Secretary to find that it is prevailing in that area. (S. Rep. No. 963, p. 6).

(d) The legislative reports indicate that, to insure against considering and giving credit to any and all fringe benefits, some of which might be illusory or not genuine, the qualification was included that such fringe benefits must be "bona fide" (H. Rep. No. 308, p. 4; S. Rep. No. 963, p. 6). No difficulty is anticipated in determining whether a particular fringe benefit is "bona fide" in the ordinary case where the benefits are those common in the construction industry and which are established under a usual fund, plan, or program. This would be typically the case of those fringe benefits listed in paragraph (a) of this section which are funded under a trust or insurance program. Contractors may take credit for contributions made under such conventional plans without requesting the approval of the Secretary of Labor under § 5.5(a)(1)(iv).

(e) Where the plan is not of the conventional type described in the preceding paragraph, it will be necessary for the Secretary to examine the facts and circumstances to determine whether they are "bona fide" in accordance with requirements of the act. This is particularly true with respect to unfunded plans. Contractors or subcontractors seeking credit under the act for costs incurred for such plans must request specific permission from the Secretary under § 5.5(a)(1)(iv).

(f) The act excludes fringe benefits which a contractor or subcontractor is obligated to provide under other Federal, State, or local law. No credit may